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Defense Travel System

While much has been written and briefed on the Defense Travel System (DTS), it has been some time since we've updated you on what's happening. That's the purpose of this short article. As you recall, the DTS is DoD's bold initiative to reengineer the TDY travel process using simplified travel entitlements, best business practices, and cutting-edge technology. DTS is intended to catapult the travel process into the 21st Century.

The DTS concept has been tested at 27 pilot sites throughout DoD. Eight of those pilot sites were Air Force locations where the systems improvements are still in operation and undergoing enhancements as new capabilities or requirements are identified. If you've been fortunate enough to be stationed at one of the pilot sites, you are well familiar with the power of this new tool.

Over a year ago, on 7 May 1998, the DoD announced that TRW had won the competition to design, integrate, and implement the DTS, beginning in DTR 6, an 11-state region in North Central United States. Since that day the journey to initial operational capability has been strewn with delays and technical surprises that have significantly delayed implementation.

Almost immediately after announcing the contract award, the competitor filed a protest that delayed the start of system testing until November 1998, a four-month slip in the original schedule. System acceptance testing started in late November 1998 and continued through mid-December. Phase I was completed in January 1999. The contractor entered into Phase II in April 1999 and over 90 major discrepancies were identified. At the time this article is being written, it appears most of the technical issues are being resolved and Phase II re-test, conducted by the Joint Interoperability Test Command (JITC), will kick off in July 1999. This is significantly later than planned and results in the start of Phase III slipping to the third week of August 1999.

Phase III tests the "end to end" operational capability of the system and will be conducted in two increments at Whiteman AFB MO. If you would like to see how DTS might look and work at your wing, you should make plans to visit Whiteman AFB sometime in the four-week test period. At the completion of Phase III, Whiteman AFB will become the first operational site for DTS. System testing will conclude at Ft Campbell KY in December 1999.

While there have been some schedule delays, the Program Management Office (PMO) intends to begin implementation in November 1999 and follow a very aggressive schedule to assure DTS 6 is fully implemented by the start of 2001. This is an ambitious schedule and if you are at one of the affected bases, you've got to be ready to go when the DTS Team comes through the gate. Even though you may not be at one of the bases in DTR 6, wing comptrollers can help prepare themselves for DTS by regularly visiting the PMO (<http://www.dtic.mil/travelink/>) or Air Force (<http://www.hq.af.mil/SAFFM/travel/aftravel>) travel reengineering websites. These sites are continually being updated and there is a wealth of information available, from technical specifications to the deployment plan.

DTS will revolutionize the way we process TDY travel from authorizations to final payment of the voucher. Today, and for many years to come, rapid voucher turn around will be a key measure of comptroller effectiveness. Often times in the past, we've met this goal by throwing people at it—it is now time to work smarter! The DTS will vastly improve the TDY travel process, and serve as a major reengineering milestone of the DoD's adopting better business practices.